

News from the

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



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Higher Education Bill Approved to Better Prepare Workforce For Monumental Challenges, Enzi Says

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) today said the Committee has approved the Higher Education Amendments Act of 2005, a bill that will help retain America's competitive edge in the global economy by ensuring that higher education prepares today's students for the demands of tomorrow's workplace.

When the workforce changes, so do the needs of college students, Enzi said Thursday. As a result, higher education in America is now in the middle of a revolution and the need for employees with a postsecondary education is growing at a faster rate than ever. The pressure is on to ensure that our students acquire the skills they will need on the job.

The reauthorization approved today is the result of months of bipartisan negotiations between Enzi and the HELP Committee's Ranking Member, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), and the House of Representatives. "I greatly appreciate Senator Kennedy's commitment to reach a compromise on key programs vital to this bill," Enzi said. "Senator Kennedy has a long and distinguished history as a champion of expanding access to higher education. His contributions to this bill have been no less exceptional." The bill passed during a mark up along with the Defined Benefit Security Act of 2005.

It is estimated that by 2015, three quarters of all workers will have some postsecondary education or

training. However, by 2020, the nation will need 14 million more skilled workers than currently can be provided.

Enzi maintained that renewal of the Higher Education Act will help effectively coordinate a range of programs, such as the Workforce Investment Act, the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and other federal education and training initiatives, to ensure that America remains competitive for years to come.

"The availability of seamless lifelong education opportunities is critical for our long-term competitiveness," Enzi added. "In this global economy, learning is never over. School is never out."

To help close the economic gap separating low income students and higher education, the bill establishes the Provisional Grant Assistance Program (ProGAP), a temporary new mandatory program that provides \$5.5 billion over 5 years in grant aid for the neediest students.

As approved by the Committee, the also bill will improve post-secondary education by strengthening the accreditation process, improving access through the use of technology, supporting student financial aid programs, reducing the need for remedial education, helping more students complete high school, and supporting transitions for all students from high school to college.

These changes will help today's students attend college and succeed by permitting greater access to distance education, ensuring that students have reliable information about the cost of attending college, and that schools are partners with business in supporting a strong American economy, he said.

This legislation amends the Higher Education Act of 1965 by making the following changes:

- Title I- Relaxes the 50 percent rule to permit schools to expand distance education offerings and establishes a new requirement that the Secretary of Education make public information about the costs of attending postsecondary programs.
- Title II B Revises the uses of funds under the State and partnership grants to meet the demand for highly qualified teachers under the ANo Child Left Behind Act. As well as enhancing the use of technology in instruction.
- Title III B Reauthorizes programs to support Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Native Hawaiian and Alaskan Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Professional or Graduate Institutions for minority serving institutions.
- Title IV B Reauthorizes the Federal Perkins Loan program which permits institutions to operate revolving loan funds. It also allows families with adjusted gross income levels below \$20,000 to automatically claim zero expected family contribution in needs analysis.
- Title V B Creates a new grant program to support graduate programs at Hispanic Serving Institutions, similar to programs already established for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- Title VIII B Authorizes a series of grant programs to help institutions of higher education develop new curriculum and services related to high skill and high growth occupations.
- Title X B Establishes a temporary new mandatory program – Pro-Gap – that provides \$5.5 billion

in grant aid for the neediest students over five years, and authorizes \$1 billion in smart grants targeted at students in their third and fourth years majoring in math, science, or foreign language fields. The legislation provides additional loan deferment for members of the armed services who serve in a combat zone.

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